

The Meat of the Matter

Consider the Environmental Consequences of Dietary Choices

As compiled by Turtle Island Foods, September 2008

Average percentage of monthly budget spent on food:

- ❖ in the U.S.: **15 %**
- ❖ in Europe: **30 %**
- ❖ in Indonesia: **60 %**

(David Pimentel, Professor of Entomology, Cornell University.)

*Pounds of grain needed to produce enough meat and other livestock products to support a person for a year: **2,000**. Pounds needed to support a person for a year if grain is eaten directly: **400***

(M.E. Ensminger, former chair of the Animal Sciences Department, Washington State University.)

Percentage of:

- ❖ soybean crop grown to feed livestock: in the US: **90%**
- ❖ corn crop grown to feed livestock: in the US: **80%**
- ❖ all grains grown to feed livestock: in the US: **70%**

*Total area of ice-free terrestrial surface of the planet occupied by grazing: **26%***

(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Livestock's Long Shadow, 2006.)

Livestock production accounts for **70%** of all agricultural land and **30%** of the surface of the planet.

(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Livestock's Long Shadow, 2006.)

Number of additional people who could be fed if all grain grown in US for livestock was used to feed people: **800 million**

(David Pimentel, Professor of Entomology, Cornell University.)

World meat production in:

- ❖ 1950: **44 million tons annually**
- ❖ Today: **253 million tons annually**

(Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Livestock's Long Shadow, 2006.)

Amount of meat consumed by the average person worldwide 50 years ago: **45 pounds**, today: **90.3 pounds**

*Tons of American cropland lost to erosion each year due to animal production: **2 billion***

(Center for Science in the Public Interest.)

Percentage of overall greenhouse gas emissions:

- ❖ due to livestock: **18%**
- ❖ due to transport vehicles (cars, trucks, airplanes, etc.): **13%**

(United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization)

Percentage of human-influenced nitrous oxide generated by livestock: **65%** (* Nitrous oxide has nearly 300 times the global warming potential of carbon dioxide.)*

(United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006)

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If 1/3 of Americans switched from eating one 3 1/2-ounce serving of beef, one egg, and a one-ounce serving of cheese each day to a mix of vegetables, fruit, beans, and whole grains:

- ❖ Acres of cropland spared: **180 million**
(an area larger than the state of Texas)
- ❖ Tons of pesticides eliminated: **9,375**
- ❖ Tons of fertilizer eliminated: **2 million**
- ❖ Tons of manure eliminated*: **570 million**

(* Livestock manure and flatulence generate 30-40% of total methane emissions from human-influenced activities.)

(United Nations, Food and Agriculture Organization, 2006.)

Methane is **23 times** more powerful in global warming potential than carbon dioxide.

(Center for Science in the Public Interest, in the book Six Arguments for a Greener Diet, 2006.)

*Average American diet produces more than **15 pounds** of CO2 per day which equals **5,600 pounds** of CO2 emissions per person per year.*

- ❖ *A vegan diet results in eliminating 1.5 tons of CO2 emissions annually, or eight pounds per day, when compared with a non-vegan diet.*

(Eshel G, and Martin P. Diet, Energy and Global Warming. Earth Interactions 10:1-17; 2006.)